

HUMAN-SPECIFIC CHILDBIRTH PROBLEMS

The challenges in human childbirth are the result of three main factors: (i) the evolution of upright posture and bipedalism, which require a narrow pelvis for efficient locomotion; (ii) the fetus needs a narrow pelvis to be adequately supported; and (iii) the human head has grown significantly larger over time. Natural selection has favored a shorter gestation period, soft skull bones at birth, and brain development after birth. Nevertheless, the problems persist. Mitteroecker and Fischer further examined these concepts in a study published in *Am. J. Obstet. Gynecol.* (1), where they support this perspective by comparing humans with our closest relatives, the great apes.

The recent paper by Pink et al. (2) addresses the same topic, expanding the analysis to include a selection of New World and Old World monkeys, as well as lesser apes. They focus particularly on the Japanese macaque (*Macaca fuscata*) because, as in humans, the fetal head is large in relation to the birth canal. The lack of delivery complications (such as fetal or maternal death) in macaques can be attributed to the flexibility of the pelvis, which in humans is constrained by the upright posture. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Mitteroecker and Fischer (1).

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/38462258>

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/39374390>